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LAST WORDS

OF

GENERAL WASHINGTON

The following circumstantial account of the last illness and death of General Washington was noted by T. Lear, on the Sunday following his death, which happened on Saturday evening, Dec. 14, 1799, between the hours of ten and eleven.

On Thursday Dec. 12 the General rode out to his farms about ten o'clock, and did not return home till past 3 oclk. Soon after he went out, the weather became very bad, rain hail and snow falling alternately, with a cold wind.—When he came in I carried some letters to him, to frank, intending to send them to the Post Office in the evening.—He franked the letters; but said the weather was too bad too send a Servant up to the Office that evening.—I observed to him that I was afraid he had got wet, he said no, his great coat had kept him dry; but his neck appeard to be wet, and the snow was hanging on his hair.—He came to dinner without changing his dress. In the Evening he appeard as well as usual.

A heavy fall of snow took place on friday, which prevented the General from riding out as usual.—He had taken cold (undoubtedly from being so much exposed the day before) and complained of having a sore throat—he had a hoarseness, which increased in the evening; but he made light of it, as he would never take anything to carry off a cold, always observing, "let it go as it came."—In the evening the papers having come from the post office, he sat in the room, with Mrs. Washington and myself, reading them, till about nine o'clock, and, when he met with anything which he thought diverting or interesting, he would read it aloud. —He desired me to read to him the debates of the Virginia Assembly, on the election of a Senator and Governor; which I did. —On his retiring to bed, he appeared to be in perfect health, excepting the cold before mentioned, which he considered as triffling, and had been remarkably cheerful all the evening.—

About 2 or 3 o'clk on Saturday Morning he awoke Mrs. Washington & told her he was very unwell, and had had an ague. She observed that he could scarcely speak, and breathed with difficulty—and would have got up to call a servant; but he would not permit her lest she should take cold.—As soon as the day appeared, the woman (Caroline) went into the room to make a fire —& he desired that Mr. Rawlins, one of the Overseers who was used to bleeding the people, might be sent for to bleed him before

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the Doctor could arrive—And the woman (Caroline) came to my room requesting I might go to the General, who was very ill.—I got up put on my clothes as quick as possible, and went to his chamber.—Mrs. Washington was then up, and related to me his being taken ill about 2 or 3 o'clk, as before stated.—I found him breathing with difficulty—and hardly able to utter a word intelligibly—I went out instantly—and wrote a line to Dr. Craik, which I sent off by my Servant, ordering him to go with all the swiftness his horse could carry him,—and immediately returned to the General's chamber, where I found him in the same situation I had left him. A mixture of Molasses, Vinegar & butter was prepared, to try its effect in the throat; but he could not swallow a drop, whenever he attempted it he appeared to be distressed, convulsed, and almost suffocated.—Mr. Rawlins came in soon after sun rise—and prepared to bleed him. When the Arm was ready—the General, observing that Rawlins appeared to be agitated, said, as well as he could speak, "*dont be afraid*," and after the incision was made, he observed, "*the orifice is not large enough.*" However, the blood ran pretty freely.—Mrs. Washington, not knowing whether bleeding was proper or not in the General's situation; beg'd that much might not be taken from him, lest it should be injurious, and desired me to stop it; but when I was about to untie the string, the general put up his hand to prevent it, and as soon as he could speak, he said "*more.*"—Mrs. W. being still uneasy lest too much blood should be taken, it was stop'd after about half a pint was taken from him.—Finding that no relief was obtained from bleeding, and that nothing would go down the throat, I proposed bathing the throat externally with Salvalattita, which was done, and in the operation, which was with the hand, and in the gentlest manner, he observed '*tis very sore.* A piece of flannel was then put round his neck. His feet were also soaked in warm water.—This, however, gave no relief.—In the mean time, before Doctor Craik arrived, Mrs. Washington requested me to send for Doct. Brown of Port Tobacco, whom Doctor Craik had recommended to be called, if any case should ever occur that was seriously alarming. —I dispatched a Messenger (Cyrus) to Dr. Brown immediately (about nine o'clk)—Doctor Craik came in soon after, and upon examining the General he put a blister of canthardis on the throat & took more blood from him, and had some Vinegar & hot water put into a Teapot, for the General to draw in the steam from the nozel—which he did, as well as he was able.—He also ordered sage tea and Vinegar to be mixed for a Gargle.—This the General used as often as desired; but when he held back his head to let it run down, it put him into great distress and almost produced suffocation. When the mixture came out of his mouth some phlegm followed it, and he would attempt to cough, which the Doctor encouraged him to do as much as he could; but without effect, he could only make the attempt.—About eleven o'clock Dr. Dick

was sent for.—Dr. Craik bled the General again about this time.—No effect, however, was produced by it, and he continued in the same state, unable to swallow anything.—Doctor Dick came in about 3 o'clk, and Dr. Brown arrived soon after.—Upon Dr. Dick's seeing the Genl. & consulting a few minutes with Dr. Craik, he was bled again, the blood ran slowly—appeared very thick, and did not produce any symptoms of fainting.—Doctor Brown came into the chamber room after, and upon feeling the General's pulse &c. the Physicians went out together.—Dr. Craik soon after returned.—The General could now swallow a little (about 4 o'clk)—Calomel & tartar em. were administered; but without any effect. —About half past 4 o'clk, he desired me to ask Mrs. Washington to come to his bed side—when he requested her to go down into his room & take from his desk two wills which she would find there, and bring them to him, which she did.—Upon looking at them he gave her [one] which he observed was useless, as it was superceeded by the other, and desired her to burn it, which she did, and then took the other & put it away.—After this was done, I returned again to his bed side and took his hand. He said to me, "*I find I am going, my breath cannot continue long, I believed,* "*from the first attack it would be fatal, do you arrange & record* "*all my late military letters & papers—arrange my accounts & settle* "*my books, as you know more about them than any one else, and* "*let Mr. Rawlins finish recording my other letters, which he has* "*begun.*"—He asked "*when Mr. Lewis L. Washington would return?*" I told him I believed about the 20th of the month. He made no reply to it.—The Physicians again came in (between 5 & 6 o'clk) and when they came to his bed side, Dr. Craik asked him if he could sit up in the bed. He held out his hand to me & was raised up, when he said to the Physicians. "*I feel myself going, you had better not take any more trouble about me; but let me go off quietly; I cannot last long.*" They found what had been done was without effect—he laid down again and they retired excepting Dr. Craik.—He the then said to him, "*Doctor, I die hard, but I am not afraid to go, I believed from my first attack that I wd not survive it, my breath cannot last long.*"—The Doctor pressed his hand but could not utter a word.—He retired from the bed side—and sat by the fire absorbed in grief.—About 8 o'clk the Physicians again came into the Room, and applied blisters to his legs;—but went out without a ray of hope.—From this time he appeared to breath with less difficulty than he had done; but was very restless, constantly changing his position to endervour to get ease.—I aided him all in my power, and was gratified in believing he felt it; for he would look upon me with his eyes speaking gratitude; but unable to utter a word without great distress.—About ten o'clock he made several attempts to speak to me before he could effect it—at length, he said, "*I am just going, Have me* "*decently buried, and do not let my body be put into the Vault in*

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"*less than two days after I am dead.*"—I bowed assent.—He looked at me again, and said "*Do you understand me*"—I replied Yes Sir, "*Tis well*" said he.—About ten minutes before he expired his breathing became much easier—he lay quietly—he withdrew his hand from mine & felt his own pulse—I spoke to Dr. Craik who sat by the fire—he came to the bed side.—The General's hand fell from his wrist.—I took it in mine and laid it upon my breast—Dr. Craik put his hand over his eyes and he expired without a struggle or a Sigh! ———While we were fixed in silent grief—Mrs. Washington asked, with a firm & collected Voice, "*Is he gone*',.—I could not speak, but held up my hand as a signal that he was.—"Tis well" said she, in a plain voice, "All is now over.—I have no more trials to pass through.—I shall soon follow him! ———

OCCURRANCES NOT NOTED IN THE PRECEDING PAGES.

The General's Servant,* Christopher, attended his bed side & in the room, when he was sitting up, through his whole illness.—About 8 o'clk in the Morning the General expressed a wish to get up. His clothes were put on, and he was led to a Chair, by the fire.—He lay down again about two hours afterwards.—A glister was administered to him, by Dr. Craik's directions, about one o'clock; but produced no effect.—He was helped up again about 5 o'clock—and after sitting about one hour, he desired to be undressed and put in bed, which was done.—Between the hours of 6 and nine o'clk, he several times asked what hour it was.—During his whole illness, he spoke but seldom & with great difficulty and distress, and in so low & broken a voice as at times hardly to be understood.—His patience, fortitude & resignation never forsook him for a moment.—In all his distress he uttered not a sigh nor a complaint, always endeavoring to take what was offered him, or to do what was desired.—

At the time of his decease Dr. Craik & myself were in the situation before mentioned.—Christopher was standing by the bed-side.—Mrs. Washington was sitting near the foot of the bed.—Caroline, Charlotte, and some other of the servants were Standing in the Room near the door.—Mrs. Forbes, the House-keeper, was frequently in the Room in the day & evening.—

As soon as Dr. Craik could speak, after the distressing scene was closed, he desired one of the Servants to ask the Gentlemen below to come up stairs.—When they came around the bed, I kissed the cold hand, which I had 'till then held, laid it down,

* In the afternoon the General observing that Christopher had been Standing by his bed side for a long time—made a motion for him to sit in a chair which stood by the bed side.—

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went to the fire and was for some time lost in profound grief, until aroused by Christopher desiring me to take care of the General's keys and things which he had taken out of his pockets, and which Mrs. Washington directed him to give to me.—I wraped them up in the General's Handkerchief, and took them with me down stairs;—About 12 o'clk the Corps was brought down and laid out in the large Room.—

Sunday—Dec. 15." —Mrs. Washington sent for me in the morning and desired I would send up to Alexa. and have a Coffin made, which I did.—Doctor Dick measured the body which was, as follows.———In length 6 ft. 3½ inchs exact

Across the Shoulders 1 — 9 —„———„

Across the Elbows —2 — 1 —„———„

After breakfast—I gave Dr. Dick and Dr. Brown forty dolls. each, which Sum Dr. Craik advised as very proper, and they left us.—I wote letters to the following persons informing them of the melancholly event.—*

Mrs. Washington informed me that the Executors to the Generals will, were— Wm. Washington Bushrod Washington G. S. Washington Saml Washington & G. W. P. Curtis.	Bushrod Washington Colo Wm. Washington	Inclosed to Colo Blackburn desiring him to forward them by express.—
	Lawrence Lewis G. W. P. Curtis	Sent express to New Kent by Cæsar.

The President of the United States General Hamilton John Lewis, desiring him to give information to his brothers George, Robert D Howell & to Capt Saml. Washington	Sent to the Post Office.

George S. Washington Colo. Ball Genl. Pinckney Capt Hammond	Sent off to Berkley on Monday Morning by my Servant Charles

Mr. Stuart was sent for in the Morning—About 10 o'clk Mr. Thos. Peter came down—and about 2 came Mr. & Mrs. Law to all whom I had sent on Saturday Evening.—Dr. Thornton came down with Mr. & Mrs. Law.—Dr. Craik tarried here all this day and night.—

In the evening I consulted with Mr. Law, Mr. Peter & Dr. Craik on fixing a day for depositing the body in the vault.—I wished the ceremony to be postponed 'till the last of the week, to give time to some of the General's Relations to be here. But Dr. Craik & Dr. Thornton gave it decidedly as their opinion that, considering the disorder of which the General died, being of an inflammatory kind, it would not be proper, nor perhaps safe to

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keep the body so long, and therefore Wednesday was fixed upon for the funeral, to allow a day (Thursday) in case the weather should be unfavorable on Wednesday.—

MONDAY—DEC. 16.

People were directed to open the Vault, clean away the rubbish from about it & make everything decent around it.—

Dr. Craik, Mr. Peter & Dr. Thornton left us after breakfast.—Mrs. Stuart and her two daughters came here in the forenoon.—Mr. Anderson went to Alexa. to get a number of things preparatory for the funeral.—Mourning clothes were ordered for the family, domestics & overseers.—

Information being received from Alexa. that the Military, Free Masons, &c. were determined to show their respect to the memory of the General, by attending his body to the grave—measures were taken to make provision for the refreshments of a large number of people, as some refreshment wd be expected. Mr. Robt Hamilton wrote a letter informing that a schooner of his would be off Mt. Vernon to fire minute guns on the funeral of the deceased.—Gave notice of the time fixed for the burial to the following persons by Mrs. Washington's desire.—Mr. Mason & family—Mr. Peake & family—Mrs. Peake—Mr. Nickols & family Mr. McCarty & family—Miss McCarty—Mr. & Mrs. McClanahan—Lord Fairfax & family—Mr. Triplett & family—Mr. Anderson & family—Mr. Diggs—Mr. Cockburn & family—L. W. Massey & family.

I wrote also to the Revd. Mr. Davis to read the Services.—

Mrs. Washington desired that a door might be made for the Vault, instead of having it closed up at formerly, after the body shd be deposited—observing—"*That it will soon be necessary to open it again.*"

TUESDAY—DEC. 17.

Every preparation for the mournful ceremony was making.—Mr. Diggs came here in the forenoon, and also Mr. Stewart Adjutant to the Alexa. Regt. to view the ground for the procession.—About one o'clk the Coffin was brought from Alexa. in a Stage.—Mr. Ingle the Cabinet maker, and Mr. W. Munn, the plumber came with it, also Mr. Grater, with the Shroud.—The body was laid in the Coffin, at which time I cut off some of the General's hair for Mrs. Washington.—

The Mahogany Coffin was lined with lead, soddered at the joints—and a cover of lead to be soddered on after the body should be in the Vault.—The whole put into a case lined & covered with black cloth.

About

WEDNESDAY—DEC. 18.

About 11 o'clk numbers of persons began to assemble to attend the funeral, which was intended to have been at twelve o'clk; but as a great part of the Troops expected could not get down in time, it did not take place till 3.—Eleven pieces of artillery were brought down.—And a Schooner belonging to Mr. R. Hamilton came down and lay off Mt. Vernon to fire minute guns.—The Pall holders were as follow—Colonels—Little, Simms, Payne, Gilpin, Ramsey, & Marsteller—and Colo. Blackburne walked before the Corps.—

Colo. Little, Simms & Deneal and Doctr Dick formed the arrangments of the Procession—which was as follows—The Troops—Horse & foot—Music playing & Solemn dirge with muffled Drums.—The Clergy—viz The Revd. Mr. Davis—Mr. Muir, Mr. Moffatt, & Mr. Addison—The Body borne by Officers & Masons, who insisted upon carrying it to the grave.—The Principal Mourners—viz. Mrs. Stuart & Mrs. Law—Misses Nancy & Sally Stuart—Miss Fairfax & Miss Dennier[?]—Mr. Law & Mr. Peter—Doctor Craik & T Lear—Lord Fairfax & Ferdinando Fairfax.——Lodge No. 23.—Corporation of Alexandria.——All other persons, preceded by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Rawlins, the Overseers, &c. &c.——

The Revd. Mr. Davis read the service & made a short extemporary speech—The Masons performed their ceremonies—and the Body was deposited in the Vault—All then returned to the House & partook of some refreshment—and dispersed with the greatest good order & regularity.—The remains of the Provision were distributed among the Blacks.—Mr. Peter, Dr. Craik & Dr. Thornton tarried here all night.

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